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A Study of the Eighth Grade Graduates of Monroe County Schools

Randall Grider

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A STUDY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES OF MONROE COUNTY SCHOOLS

BY

RANDALL GRIDER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

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PREFACE

It is the purpose of this thesis, in addition to fulfilling the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, to discuss some of the problems of Monroe County Schools which are common to administrators, supervisors, and teachers. Public funds are appropriated and earmarked for education in order that every child may be provided with an elementary and secondary education.

One of the greatest problems facing school administrators today is to see that the schools are conducted in such a manner that each child will see cause to attain a secondary school education, and that the schools will meet the needs of all who attend.

It is hoped that this survey will bring to light some of the reasons why all children do not complete a high school education; thereby, providing some conclusions that would contribute to a more wholesome educational program. It is only through the recognition of, and the correct attitude toward the individual problems of each child that all may receive the greatest benefits from educational opportunities.

This thesis could hardly have been prepared without the guidance and assistance of Dr. Leo Francis Jones, head of the Department of Education, Western Kentucky State College, and for that assistance the writer expresses his gratitude. The writer is also grateful to the Superintendent of Monroe County Schools, Parrell Carter, who has made available the files, records, and reports of his office. This information was most essential in preparing the survey.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education to the youth of America is not easily evaluated. There was a day when every man could do those tasks which were required for successful living. This, of course, was brought about by the simplicity of the tasks to be performed. Those were the days when most men were tillers of the soil and caretakers of the herds of domestic animals. As civilization has advanced specialization has developed, and with the development of specialization the number of trades requiring special training and skill has increased.

The complexity of our modern society which has brought about great changes in social and economic conditions makes the adjustment of the child to his surroundings a much greater task for education than in years past. Along with the change in conditions and the greater task for education has come a greater interest in the welfare of the child. Education has been organized and maintained as a public enterprise in order to aid the child in making these adjustments. "The supreme purpose of education should be conceived as the development of rich and many sided personalities fitted for participation involving high ideals and adequate corresponding knowledge and skills."¹ If this supreme purpose is held in mind the child then becomes the point where the interest of the school administration and teachers is centered. Education

¹
William A. Yeager, Administration and the Pupil (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 17.

may be looked upon as the basis of our Democracy and the best guarantee for a free world; it is the approved way for an individual to realize his own potentialities.

One must not lose sight of the fact that if our democracy is to remain strong, students must be developed to understand and support a democracy through each child's reaching goals of self realization, human relationships, economic efficiency, and civic responsibility. These goals will not be reached unless the school has the power to hold all of the students who enter until they have completed the curriculum.

Changes in educational thinking and practice have been as great as the changes in civilization. In the early days of education it was the duty of the child to learn strict obedience and to store up certain facts and skills that would be of use to them in adult life. Modern psychology has shown this concept to be false. "Information and skills which are not used are discarded through the mechanism of forgetting."²

The value of education can be measured only by its product. If the behavior of those students subjected to public education is not changed, there is no product, and it may be said that education in general has failed. "Learning is an active process; one learns through his own activity."³ Therefore, it becomes the duty and responsibility of the teacher to direct the activities of the

² Edwin H. Reeder, Supervision in the Elementary Schools (Houghton-Mifflin and Co., Chicago, 1933), p. 51.

³ Gerale Hammonds: Teaching Agriculture (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1950), p. 12.

pupil in such a manner as to gain the greatest amount of change in behavior. Directing the activity of the pupil is not done by accident. The thinking of the school administration, attitudes of teachers toward school policies, and especially, the desire of the teacher to understand the problems of the students reflects directly upon the progress of the children. The school must, first of all, be conducted so that students may have a desire to attend. Schools cannot contribute to the welfare of the child unless he is enrolled and is in attendance.

The curriculum is probably the greatest single factor influencing the progress of the student and the school. The curriculum may be defined as the totality of the subject matter, activities, and experiences which constitute the school life of the student. "A curriculum develops an answer to the needs of a group of learners and to the needs of a given society. A curriculum is made by the teacher and his pupils as they work together."⁴ Children do not profit equally from the same experiences because of the difference in their mental levels; in their readiness for the task; in the effectiveness of their study habits; in their background of experiences; and in their effort put forth.

With these thoughts in mind it must be concluded that public education should be of the greatest importance to those who are responsible for conducting the program. In most localities the amount of money spent on education exceeds the amount spent on other public agencies. More people are directly connected with

⁴ A. S. Barr, W. H. Burton, and L. J. Brueschner, Supervision (New York, Appleton Century Crafts, Inc., 1947), p. 627.

public education than any other public or private enterprise. "Plans must be made and policies adopted; the plans and policies must be properly executed; and information must be collected which will show how efficiently the plans and policies are operating, and which will also become the basis for new and better plans and policies. Much of the work of the classroom teacher is school administration."⁵ In order to evaluate the product of the educational system of a district, information is essential which will show:

1. The general plans and policies of the school.
2. The manner and efficiency in which the plans are executed.
3. Indication of changes of policies which will improve the situation.
4. How the behavior of the student has been changed as a result of the policies and their execution.
5. Holding power of the school.

If only one fourth of those students who are enrolled in eighth grade, in a given year, actually complete high school, surely there would be no argument on behalf of the school as having fulfilled its obligations to society. This number of drop-outs may be due to several factors, such as promotion policies, poor school offerings, lack of a full and enriched activity program, and many other conditions. All of these things should be considered deeply by school administrators in order that all students might be reached.

Information for the survey which follows was obtained from

⁵ Lord C. Heeder, The Fundamentals of Public School Administration (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1931), p. 5.

the Teacher's Registers for the six years studied, the annual reports of the Superintendent of Schools of Monroe County, and the individual records of the pupils as recorded in the office of the principal in the high schools. Also, information was received by personal interview of the fifteen drop-out cases studied.

CHAPTER II
PROBLEMS TO BE CONSIDERED

Having been associated with the schools of Monroe County for a number of years and having noticed, generally, that a great number of the students who were enrolled in eighth grade did not enter high school, and that many of those who did enter did not complete twelfth grade, the writer became interested to know why this situation existed. If schools are financed and provided in order that all children may benefit from the supreme purpose of education, as was stated in the introductory chapter, it is necessary for all to make the maximum use of the schools.

Teaching has been referred to as the "Mother of all Occupations." Assuming that this statement is true it cannot be fulfilled unless all are taught the skills of the various occupations they plan to enter; therefore, education must not stop with the completion of eighth grade nor the completion of high school. Some must become teachers, some must become highly skilled in the other arts and science fields. All of them require going beyond the high school level.

In order to know whether or not the supreme purpose of education is being accomplished, one must know the reactions of those involved toward the educational program. This may be determined, in part, by knowing:

1. The physical plan of the schools of the district.
2. The number of eighth grade graduates in Monroe County schools over a period of six years.
3. What these graduates did after completion of eighth grade.
 - a. Number entering high school.

- b. Number not entering high school.
 - c. Number who failed eighth grade examinations.
 - d. Number who made failures in high school.
 - e. Number who completed high school.
 - f. Number who dropped out of high school.
 - g. Number entering college.
- 4. Average grades of eighth grade graduates.
 - 5. Average age of eighth grade graduates.
 - 6. Reasons for dropping out.

CHAPTER III
DATA AND ANALYSIS OF MONROE COUNTY SCHOOLS

TABLE I
ENROLLMENT DURING SIX YEAR PERIOD

Grade	Year					
	1949-50	1950-51	1951-52	1952-53	1953-54	1954-55
1st	670	570	512	515	533	479
2nd	384	373	342	322	324	357
3rd.	393	379	350	309	278	306
4th.	379	379	380	337	310	287
5th.	316	365	329	338	308	307
6th.	308	279	325	296	304	278
7th.	207	277	224	276	276	265
8th.	269	186	242	215	244	227
9th.	92	104	112	160	145	172
10th.	137	77	117	100	139	120
11th.	52	110	63	106	89	120
12th.	101	43	90	61	99	79
TOTAL	3308	3181	3086	3135	3049	3008

Table I is shown to demonstrate the holding power of the school in general. It will be noted that for some reason too many children have dropped out of school from year to year. In 1949-50 there were 670 enrolled in first grade, while in 1954-55 only 278 were enrolled in sixth grade. Of the 269 who were enrolled in eighth grade in 1949-50 only 99 were enrolled in 12th grade in 1953-54. A trend of this nature is revealed throughout

the table; however, the greatest number of drop-outs seems to occur between the eighth and ninth grades.

TABLE II
EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES BY AGE GROUPS

Year Graduated	Age at graduation									
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1949-50	4	21	52	56	26	7	3		1	1
1950-51		19	53	35	11	7				
1951-52	2	25	87	40	21		1			
1952-53	2	21	64	56	17	5				
1953-54	6	31	86	49	27	4				
1954-55	2	36	66	53	21	17	2			
TOTAL	16	153	408	289	123	40	6	0	1	1

Table II would indicate that those students who graduated at ages of 16 or above have been retarded for some cause. During the year 1949-50 the number who graduated in this age group was 28.6 per cent of the total who graduated at ages 15 and under. In a "Study of Monroe County Schools" by William A. Goad¹, it is revealed that 30 per cent of the children enrolled in one-teacher schools were failed each year, 26 per cent were failed in the two-teacher schools, 22 per cent failed in the Fountain Run consolidated elementary school, 14 per cent in the Gamaliel elementary school, and 9 per cent failed in the Tompkinsville elementary school each year. These figures were based on averages for

¹William A. Goad, A Study of Monroe County Schools, unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Western Kentucky State College, Bowling Green, 1953.

all students enrolled in grades one through eight in the schools mentioned.

It is easy to understand why such a large number of students would be completing eighth grade each year at a retarded age, when from 20 to 30 per cent of the students are retained each year. It is rather surprising that they would remain in school at all. The total for the six years studied shows that the number who graduated at age 16 and above was 20 per cent of the total number graduating at age 15 and under.

TABLE III
FINAL EXAMINATION GRADES OF EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES

Year	Grade Made					Dropped out during year
	A	B	C	D	F	
1949-50	11	23	81	56	79	19
1950-51	22	25	52	26	37	24
1951-52	26	27	95	41	52	13
1952-53	24	34	83	24	27	23
1953-54	35	78	59	31	19	19
1954-55	34	65	72	26	17	13
TOTAL	152	252	442	204	231	101

During the year 1949-50 as shown in Table III the aggregate of those students who made D and F was large than the combined number who made A, B, and C. This is a strong indication that the grading system was poor. This fact is shown further by observing that the total of those who dropped out and failed during this same year is 36 per cent of the total number enrolled. Also, during the 1951-52 school year the total of those who dropped out and failed was 27 per cent of the total enrollment for that year.

During the first three years as shown in Table III a county examination, made and given by the district supervisory staff, was given each eighth grade student enrolled as a basis for promotion to ninth grade. It will be noted from the table that the number and per centage of failures was much greater during the first three years than during the last three. There is no significant difference noted in the number of students who dropped

out during the first three year period as compared with the latter period. After the method of promoting by examination was discontinued the class room teachers promoted or retained students on the basis of work done in the class room.

TABLE IV
RELATIONSHIP OF PROMOTED TO NON PROMOTED

Year	Number Promoted	Number Retained	Number Who Dropped Out	Total not Promoted
1949-50	171	79	19	98
1950-51	125	37	24	61
1951-52	176	52	13	65
1952-53	165	27	23	50
1953-54	203	19	19	38
1954-55	197	17	13	30
TOTAL	1037	231	111	342

One might get some idea of the value of the program of the school by comparing the number not promoted to that which is promoted. It is generally understood among educators that if a school is serving its purpose, the number which are not promoted should be very small in comparison to those who are promoted. Promotion should indicate progress on both the part of the teaching staff and the students. During the year 1949-50, as shown in Table IV, it is noticed that the total number not promoted was over half the number promoted. It was almost that high during the next two years. Beginning with the 1952-53 school year a different method of promoting eighth grade students was started, and it seems that some improvement is indicated.

TABLE V

NUMBER OF EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES WHO ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL AS
COMPARED TO THOSE WHO DID NOT GO TO HIGH SCHOOL

Year	Total promoted	Number entering high school	Number not entering high school	Per cent not entering high school
1949-50	171	144	27	15.8
1950-51	125	112	13	10.5
1951-52	176	160	16	9.0
1952-53	165	145	20	12.1
1953-54	203	172	31	15.2
1954-55	197	179	18	9.1
TOTAL	1037	912	125	12.0

Even if all students are promoted in eighth grade it still leaves the schools with the great task of seeing that students continue to be enrolled in school. As has already been pointed out the number not promoted in relation to those promoted is too high, and it is thought that if another large portion of those who are promoted are lost between elementary and high school it is just as bad as if they had never been promoted. Since graduates are presented with a certificate or diploma upon completion of eighth grade, it is felt that students are made to feel that they have completed their education, when actually they have just begun.

Table V does not show any actual trend in improvement of the drop-out situation between elementary and high school; however, it does show that the number who do drop out is entirely too high.

TABLE VI

EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES WHO FAILED ACADEMIC SUBJECTS IN HIGH SCHOOL

Year Graduated	Number of Students Failing					
	1 Subjects	2 Subjects	3 Subjects	4 Subjects	5 Subjects	6 Subjects
1949-50	4	3	2		1	
1950-51	7	4	4	1	3	1
1951-52	13	13	4	1	2	
1952-53	11	3	2	2		
1953-54	11	6		1		1
1954-55	3					
TOTAL	49	29	12	5	6	2

The argument was given by a number of the high school teachers of the county that if the method of promoting students from eighth to ninth grade was changed that the caliber of the students entering high school would be so poor that they would not succeed. The method of promotion is discussed earlier in the survey. Table VI shows exactly the opposite of the above mentioned teachers. Prior to 1952-53 students were promoted by county examination. It is shown that more failures were recorded in high school for students who took the examination for promotion than was recorded for those who were promoted by the teacher. It seems that for the last three-year period more students failed one subject than during the first three-year period, but the number failing more than one subject was much smaller for those promoted under the new system.

TABLE VII
FIFTEEN CASES WHO DID NOT ENTER HIGH SCHOOL

Year Graduated	Age	Kind of School Graduated From	Present Occupation	Reason for Not Entering
1949-50	16	One-room	Farming	No need felt
1949-50	15	Consolidated	Printing shop clerk	Economic
1949-50	17	One-room	Labor at sawmill	No need felt
1950-51	16	Consolidated	At home	No need felt
1951-52	17	One-room	Farming	No need felt
1951-52	16	Two-room	Housewife	Married
1951-52	16	One-room	Day labor	No need felt
1952-53	14	One-room	Day labor, Farming	No need felt
1952-53	17	One-room	Housewife	Married
1953-54	17	Consolidated	Farming	No need felt
1953-54	15	One-room	Farming	Married, Economic
1953-54	14	One-room	At home, Unemployed	No need felt
1954-55	17	Consolidated	Housewife	Married
1954-55	15	One-room	Day labor	No need felt
1954-55	15	One-room	Housewife	Married

Most of those included in Table VII are from one-room schools. This would be expected since there are more drop-outs from this type of school than from the consolidated schools. Those surveyed were asked to classify their reasons for not entering high school as:

Further education not needed, economic, marriage, death, and other. The most common reason for not continuing in school is shown to be that there was no need felt for further education. It will be easily noted that the majority of the cases interviewed were in an age group that indicates they may have been retained at some time during their elementary education. Four girls and one boy married, which brought an end to their education.

Table VII bears out the same point mentioned earlier, that the schools have a great task in seeing that students enter high school. Since most of the cases indicated that no need was felt for further education, it is a strong indication that there is a weakness in the elementary schools in developing the desire to go to high school in the eighth grade students.

TABLE VIII

EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES WHO ENTERED COLLEGE

Year	Number Entering	Grade Made in High School		
		A	B	C
1949-50	21	4	11	10
1950-51	11	3	2	6
1951-52	25	2	11	12
1952-53	27	4	5	18
1953-54	33	7	10	16
1954-55	29	5	4	20
TOTAL	146	25	43	62

It should be pointed out that the students included in Table VIII did not graduate from eighth grade in the year indicated in the "year" column. Students graduating from eighth grade in 1952 and later have not yet had the opportunity to enter college; therefore, it was necessary to limit the study to those who entered college each year during the period covered. This does not give a true picture of the group being studied in the survey, but does give some idea of the students going to college. The total number entering college for this period represents approximately 30 per cent of those graduating from high school. No point is taken as to whether the number going to college is smaller or larger than it should be, but the table does indicate that the number of "A" students continuing their education beyond high school is not as large as it should be.

Figure I will show that Monroe County is maintaining approximately sixty one-room and two-room elementary rural schools. Two elementary schools are provided for colored children; one of these a one-room school and the other a two-room school. The district provides two high schools, located at Gamaliel and Tompkinsville. The blue line drawn across Figure I will show that portion of the district served by each school. Gamaliel serves approximately one-third of the county, leaving two-thirds to be served by the Tompkinsville school. Both Gamaliel and Tompkinsville are twelve grade schools.

Permission is granted to all seventh and eighth grade students attending the one and two-room schools to attend the Tompkinsville or Gamaliel schools if they desire. Not all students take advantage of this opportunity.

No colored high schools are maintained; however, colored eighth grade graduates may attend the two high schools in the county if they so desire.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The survey shows many interesting facts concerning the eighth grade graduates of Monroe County schools. These facts, if properly recognized, should bring to the attention of school administrators and teachers many problems which gain thorough and immediate attention. As was set forth in the introductory chapter, policies must be adopted and carried out, and if they are not serving their purpose they should be revised. By policy, due to a lack of financial aid, many one-room schools are maintained throughout the county along with a few two-room schools. Grades one through eight are taught in these schools. There are three consolidated elementary schools in the county with two of these having high schools with them. It was the policy during the first three years of this survey for eighth grade pupils to pass a county examination, prepared and given by the county supervisory staff, in order to be promoted to high school. During the last three years studied pupils were promoted from eighth grade by their individual teachers. During the years in which the county examinations were given the percentage of those who failed ran as high as twenty-nine per cent of the total number enrolled in eighth grade; while for the last three-year period the percentage of those failing dropped to about eight per cent.

Although this survey is limited to eighth grade graduates it is interesting to note that only a little over half of those entering first grade actually finish eighth grade, and that less

than half of those graduating from eighth grade complete high school. The survey indicates that, after graduation, the greatest number of drop-outs occur between eighth and ninth grades. The number dropping out between eighth and ninth grades is as great as the total dropping out between ninth and twelfth grades. The percent of graduates not entering high school for the six-year period was twelve, running as high as 15.6 per cent for the highest year and down to 9.0 per cent for the lowest year.

The number of students graduating from eighth grade at the ages of sixteen and above is high in comparison to those graduating at fifteen and under. The total for the six years studied shows that the number who graduated at age sixteen and above was twenty per cent of the number graduating at age fifteen and under.

The study of the fifteen cases who did not enter high school indicates that the predominating reasons for not entering were lack of interest, or no interest, and marriage. The number of students entering college totaled 146 for the six year period. This is approximately thirty per cent of those graduating from high school.

Conclusions

In light of the facts that have been revealed in the summary it can be concluded that the amount of non-promotion should be reduced. This practice results in a loss to both the pupil and society, with the greatest loss going to the student. The wide range among teachers and the high percentage of non-promotion would lead one to conclude that not enough emphasis is given to the procedure of reporting pupil progress. Many students become discouraged and drop out because of the fact that they are not promoted, thus causing them to be placed outside their age group.

The fact that such a great number of students drop out between eighth and ninth grades causes the writer to believe that a wide gap has developed between elementary and high school. This gap could be caused in part by the practice of granting diplomas to eighth grade graduates, which in turn may cause them to think they have completed their education. It is felt that many students are not going beyond eighth grade because the high schools do not provide a curriculum to meet the needs and interests of a great number of the pupils. The high schools have no offerings in the field of industrial arts.

Comparing the number who graduated each year from eighth grade to the number in seventh grade the year before, to the number in sixth grade two years previous, etc.; it is almost unbelievable when one makes the comparison of the number of eighth grade graduates to the number who were in first grade eight years earlier. This is a clear indication of the holding power of the school.

Since more of those students who drop out between eighth and ninth grades are found to come from the one and two-room schools, it can be concluded that these schools are failing to develop the need and desire for further education in the minds of their students. This may be due to the fact that, in these schools, most of the emergency teachers are found.

Recommendations

In view of the fact that this survey may be non-conclusive on many points, the recommendations which follow are of a general nature. The writer feels that since it is concluded only that certain situations exist, and in most cases the reasons for those existing situations are not revealed, the first recommendation to be offered is that a further study be made in order to correct the situations to the greatest efficiency.

Promotional practices should be reviewed and a plan should be devised which will keep children more closely to their age groups.

A study should be made of the possibilities of organizing a Junior High School in each of the high schools in order to close the gap between eighth and ninth grades.

A guidance program should be started in the seventh grade to assure each student of the values of continuing in school.

A study of the curriculum should be made and one arrived at which will meet the needs of all the students. The school offerings should be broadened.

Since many of the one and two-room elementary schools are small, it is recommended that consolidated elementary schools be constructed and located in the centers of population throughout the county to take care of those students in grades one through six.

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